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Constructivist approach as an effective method of teaching English

Nowadays there is a great variety of approaches to teaching English. Our research touches upon an effective modern approach – constructivist teaching. The present article deals with analysis of its impact on the improvement of the process of learning English. Constructivist teaching is based on the idea that learners themselves are the makers of their own knowledge.

The *actuality* of this article is grounded by great effectiveness of this method in development of language skills. Constructivist teaching stimulates critical thinking and creates motivated independent learners. The *aim* of this article is to present an overview of constructivist approach characteristics and to analyze its effectiveness.

Jerome Bruner was one of the constructivist theory founders. The major theme in Bruner's theoretical frame work is treating learning as an active process in which learners construct new ideas or concepts based upon their own current knowledge. The learner selects and transforms information, constructs hypotheses, and makes decisions, develops more effective cognitive structures to learn how to learn. Thus they can make sense of what is taught. The instructor and the student should be engaged in an active dialogue. The task of the instructor is to transform the information to be learned into a format appropriate to the learner's current state of understanding [1]. Methods of constructivist teaching were also researched by David Nunan and David Jonassen. In their works they state that one of the primary goals of constructivist teaching is to develop students' ability to take initiative in their own learning experience. There is a great focus and emphasis on social and communication skills as well as collaboration and exchange the ideas. This thesis differs from the traditional classroom activities in which students work primarily by achieving their aims through repetition. In the constructivist classroom the teacher's main role is to prompt and facilitate discussion. Instead of giving a lecture the teachers due to this theory function as facilitators. The teacher's role is to aid the students when it comes to their own understanding. This takes away the focus from the teacher and lecture and puts it upon the student and their learning. The teacher

focuses on guiding the students by asking questions and leads them to develop their own conclusions on the subject [4]. David Jonassen identifies three major roles for facilitators to support students in constructivist learning environments such as *modelling*, *coaching* and *scaffolding*. *Modelling* is focused on the expert's performance. *Coaching* is focused on the learner's performance. *Scaffolding* is a more systemic approach which provides temporary frameworks to support learning and student performance beyond their capacities [2].

David Nunan considers that traditional assessment in the classrooms is based on testing. In this context, it is important for the student to produce correct answers. However, in constructivist teaching the process of gaining knowledge is viewed as being just as important as the product. Thus, assessment is based not only on tests, but also on observation of the student, the student's work and the student's points of view. Some assessment strategies include *oral discussions*, *mind mapping*, *hands-on activities* and *pre-testing*. Due to *oral discussions* the teacher presents students a "focus" question and allows an open discussion on the topic. *Mind mapping* categorizes the concepts and ideas relating to the topic. *Hands-on activities* encourage students to manipulate their environments or use a particular learning tool. Teachers can combine a checklist and observation to assess student success with the particular material. *Pre-testing* allows a teacher to determine what knowledge students bring to a new topic and thus will be helpful in further directing of the course of study. No less interesting technique of activation of cognitive activity is the *technique of the role game* which can also reflect a principle of problematical character at its certain organization and allows solving problem situations of a various degree of complexity. The main activity in a constructivist classroom is *solving problems*. Students ask questions, investigate a topic and use a variety of resources to find solutions and answers. [3].

We come to a conclusion that the advantages of the teaching approach mentioned above are numerous and they contribute to the development of language learning communication skills. The constructivism learning theory will allow students to develop their language skills and confidence to describe the world around them. Method of constructivism support the philosophy of learning which build students' and teachers' understanding. This approach to teaching and learning requires that teachers take the time to get to know students in depth. In other words, a constructivist classroom is a student-

centered classroom. Constructivist approach supports equitable and fair treatment of all students. Finally, constructivism supports collaborative learning – students both work with each other and learn from one another. This approach helps to learn English and also promotes the development of a strong learning community.

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